IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A variable voice rate apparatus to control a reproduction rate of voice, comprising:

a voice data generation unit configured to generate voice data from the voice;

a text data generation unit configured to generate text data indicating a content of the voice data, based on the generated voice data;

a division information generation unit configured to generate division information used for dividing the text data into a plurality of linguistic units each of which is characterized by a linguistic form;

a reproduction information generation unit configured to generate, as reproduction information concerning reproduction control of the voice for each of linguistic units, information indicating a probability with which preset ones of the linguistic units are combined in a preset order~~set for each of the linguistic units~~; and

a voice reproduction controller which selects, from the linguistic units, combinations of linguistic units each having a probability lower than a preset value, based on the reproduction information and the division information, and controls reproduction of the voice data corresponding to the selected combinations~~each of the linguistic units, based on the reproduction information and the division information~~.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): ~~The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising~~ A variable voice rate apparatus to control a reproduction rate of voice, comprising:

a voice data generation unit configured to generate voice data from the voice;

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a text data generation unit configured to generate text data indicating a content of the voice data, based on the generated voice data;

a division information generation unit configured to generate division information used for dividing the text data into a plurality of linguistic units each of which is characterized by a linguistic form;

a reproduction information generation unit configured to generate, as reproduction information concerning reproduction control of the voice for each of linguistic units, information indicating a probability with which preset ones of the linguistic units are combined in a preset order;

a first storage which stores the reproduction information[[,]]; and

a voice reproduction controller which selects, from the linguistic units, combinations of linguistic units each having a probability lower than a preset value, based on the stored reproduction information and the division information, and controls reproduction of the voice data corresponding to the selected combinations.

~~wherein the voice reproduction controller acquires the reproduction information and controls reproduction of each of the linguistic units.~~

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): ~~The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising~~ A variable voice rate apparatus to control a reproduction rate of voice, comprising:

a voice data generation unit configured to generate voice data from the voice;

a text data generation unit configured to generate text data indicating a content of the voice data, based on the generated voice data;

a division information generation unit configured to generate division information used for dividing the text data into a plurality of linguistic units each of which is characterized by a linguistic form;

a reproduction information generation unit configured to generate, as reproduction information concerning reproduction control of the voice for each of linguistic units, information indicating a probability with which preset ones of the linguistic units are combined in a preset order;

a first storage which stores the reproduction information;, and

a second storage which stores the voice data and the division information[[,]]; and

wherein the a voice signal selection unit configured to select, from the linguistic units, combinations of linguistic units each having a probability lower than a preset value, based on the stored reproduction information and the stored division information, and reproduction controller generates a voice signal, based on the voice data corresponding to the selected combinations each of the linguistic units of the voice data stored in the second storage, based on the reproduction information and the division information.

Claims 4-12 (Canceled)

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 1 12, further comprising a detection unit configured to detect each time for reproducing each of the linguistic units,

wherein the voice reproduction controller selects, from the linguistic units by priority, combinations of linguistic units each having a probability lower than a preset value, linguistic units each of which contains a string of characters having a higher level of priority than a priority level, based on the reproduction information and the division information, a total

time for reproducing the linguistic units ~~each of which contains the string of characters~~ being

not more than a preset time, and controls <u>reproduction of the voice data corresponding to the</u>

selected<u>combinations</u> ~~linguistic units independently to each other in reproduction~~.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim

<u>2</u>~~1~~, <u>further comprising a detection unit configured to detect each time for reproducing each of</u>

<u>the linguistic units,</u>

wherein~~:~~

~~the reproduction information generation unit generates, as the reproduction~~

~~information, information indicating a probability with which preset ones of the linguistic~~

~~units are combined in a preset order; and~~

the voice reproduction controller selects, from the linguistic units, combinations of

linguistic units each having a probability lower than a preset value, <u>based on the stored</u>

<u>reproduction information and the division information, a total time for reproducing the</u>

<u>linguistic units being not more than a preset time, and controls reproduction of the voice data</u>

<u>corresponding to the selected combinations.</u> ~~selected combinations of linguistic units being~~

~~controlled independently to each other in reproduction.~~

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim

<u>3</u>~~14~~, further comprising a detection unit configured to detect <u>each time for reproducing each</u>

<u>of the linguistic units,</u> ~~a time for reproducing each of the units,~~

wherein the voice <u>signal selection unit</u> ~~reproduction controller~~ selects, from the

linguistic units, combinations of linguistic units each having a probability lower than the

preset value, based on the <u>stored</u> reproduction information and the <u>stored</u> division

information, a total time for reproducing ~~selected combinations of~~<u>the</u> linguistic units being

not more than a preset time, and generates a voice signal, based on the voice data

corresponding to the selected combinations selected combinations of linguistic units being

controlled independently to each other in reproduction.

Claim 16 (Canceled).

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): A variable voice rate method of controlling a

reproduction rate of voice, comprising:

generating voice data from the voice;

generating text data indicating a content of the voice data, based on the generated

voice data;

generating division information used for dividing the text data into a plurality of

linguistic units each of which is characterized by a linguistic form;

generating, as reproduction information concerning reproduction control of the voice

for each of linguistic units, information indicating a probability with which preset ones of the

linguistic units are combined in a preset order set for each of the linguistic units;

selecting, from the linguistic units, combinations of linguistic units each having a

probability lower than a preset value, based on the reproduction information and the division

information; and

controlling reproduction of the voice data corresponding to the selected

combinations each of the linguistic units, based on the reproduction information and the

division information.